



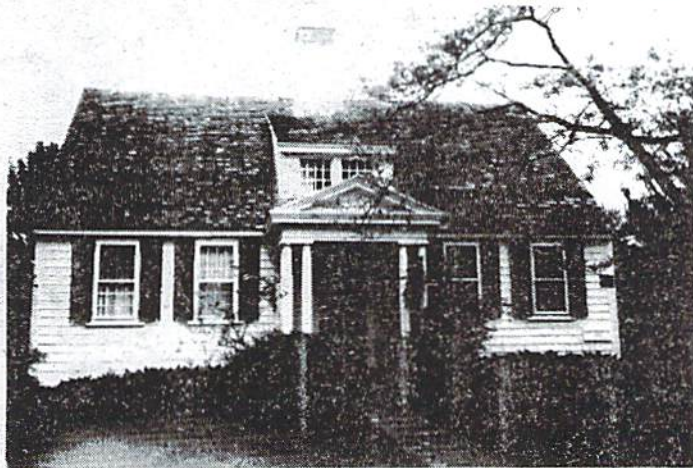
James Woodward 1801

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HISTORICAL HOUSES - NAMED, M-Z

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, July 18, 1974



In December of 1800, James Woodward, a Duxbury shipwright, bought a lot from Bartlett Holmes, a sailmaker. Important to both was the reservation of a right "down to the shoar," a right maintained in deeds up to the present, the way now called Bumblebee Lane. With his shipbuilding skills, James built a sturdy Cape Cod house for his wife Polly the following year in the heart of the fast growing, bustling shipbuilding community. Five years later he sold half of his property at nearly the price he had paid for the whole and in 1814 he mortgaged the house to Phineas Sprague. That same year, James, as crew member on neighbor Ahira Wadsworth's schooner, OSPRA, was captured by the British ship LEANDER and was retained as a prisoner for a short time.

The house was bought for \$650 by Andrew Stetson, a shoemaker in 1821, just in time for the birth of his first son early in 1822. Thus began a rather unusual dynasty, for the home remained in the Stetson family until 1967, but those years spanned only 3 owners for each Stetson, father, son, and grandson lived to his middle 90's. Andrew's cobble shop, nearby on Washington St., was a gathering place for politically minded Duxburyites. He soon bought more land to the north of his original lot. In 1831 he secured a way through Martin Waterman's land to the main street. Here he built several small houses as income property. A hundred years later this was established by the town as Stetson Place.

Changes were made to the house through the years. Andrew's artist daughter, Sylvia, embellished the simple Cape exterior with a columned portico and dormer. She added inside refinements which give the house the somewhat formal character it has today. The stairway, unusual in that it was never central, was removed. Later, the Victorian newel post and stair rail were replaced with old ones from a house being demolished in Roxbury. The second generation, inheriting late in life, made few changes and kept the house airtight.

It was up to the third and fourth generations, in the 1920's, to open the house again, unboarding fireplaces, stripping matting from floors and paper from ceilings and walls. The original Christian doors were found in the house on Stetson Place and restored and small-paned windows were again installed. With the addition of plumbing, the opening of small rooms into large and a big porch for outdoor living, the old home became comfortable for 20th century living.

At various times there have been a firehouse, a dancehall and a blacksmith shop next door. Peterson's Store was nearby as well as a variety of shops, taverns and boarding houses for sailors. Today, nestled between 2 quiet lanes, the home of Marsden and Alexandra Earle has a sleepy country air which belies the lively clamor of its early days.

Alexandra B. Earle, Researcher
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